

TERRITORY EXTRA 8.8.88 - CLP CONFERENCE, M. PERRON,  
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In Alice Springs over the weekend the Country Liberal Party has been working hard to patch up its differences and set a course for the next twelve months. Louise Maher sent this report on the annual three day conference.

LOUISE The official conference theme was land and conservation. Unofficially it was mainly about stability, getting the Country Liberal Party back on track and rebuilding public confidence. Ironically it was also the weekend that saw the old Ghan back on the rails, a dream come true for Party Speaker, Roger Vale. The new Chief Minister, Marshall Perron, was the first to admit the CLP has had problems.

PERRON YES WE HAVE SUFFERED FROM AN UNACCEPTABLE DEGREE OF RESTLESSNESS IN THE PARLIAMENTARY WING IN RECENT YEARS AND THIS HAS HAD A DESTABILISING EFFECT ON THE ALL IMPORTANT RANK AND FILE OF THE COUNTRY LIBERAL PARTY AS WELL AS THE TERRITORY ITSELF. AND YES WE HAVE MANAGED SOME ISSUES APPALLINGLY BADLY TO THE EMBARRASSMENT TO OUR FRIENDS AND SUPPORTERS, WHILST PROVIDING GRISTS TO THE MEDIA MILLS AND GLADDENING THE HEARTS OF OUR POLITICAL ENEMIES AND THE TERRITORY'S HABITUAL DETRACTORS. AND YES THE TERRITORY ECONOMY HAS BEEN THROUGH ITS FLATTEST PERIOD SINCE THE EARLY SEVENTIES. SMALL BUSINESS IS HURTING, OUR POPULATION GROWTH FIGURES HAVE LEVELLED OUT AND THERE WAS EVEN SOME DANGER OF THE

FEELING OF AGGRESSIVE SELF CONFIDENCE, WHICH WAS THE HALL MARK OF TERRITORIANS IN THE SALAD DAYS, WHICH FOLLOWED SELF GOVERNMENT IN '78 AND LASTED THROUGH TO THE MIDDLE OF THIS DECADE, BUT THERE IS NO REASON TO RUN OUT AND CUT OUR THROATS.

LOUISE The CLP is desperate to reinforce its image as the only viable conservative party in the Territory. Thus the conference witnessed a three prong attack on the Territory Nationals lead by the Chief Minister.

PERRON THE SO CALLED TERRITORY NATIONALS HAVE ONE MEMBER IN THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY. IRRESPECTIVE OF HOW THAT MEMBER REGARDS HIMSELF OR IS REGARDED BY HIS DIMINISHING FAN CLUB, I REGARD HIM AS AN INDEPENDENT BACK BENCHER WITH NO POLITICAL BASE AND NO PROSPECTS. WHILST I SEE MERIT IN ACCEPTING RANK AND FILE MEMBERS OF THE TERRITORY NATIONALS BACK INTO THE CLP FOLD, ONCE THEY GET OVER THEIR MISGUIDED TRIP INTO THE LAND OF FRINGE POLITICS, I SEE NO POINT AT ALL IN TALKING TO THE PRETENDER WHO SITS IN THE ASSEMBLY AS THE MEMBER FOR BARKLY.

LOUISE Party President, Shane Stone, also ruled out a coalition but used the opportunity to try to win back some CLP defectors.

STONE RUNNING A THREE CORNERED CONTEST IN ELECTIONS IS BAD FROM AN ECONOMIC AND RESOURCE POINT OF VIEW AND IT CARRIES THE RISK OF GIVING LABOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO EXPLOIT DIFFERENCE OF OPINION FOR POLICY BETWEEN THE CONSERVATIVE PARTIES. AND THAT IS SOMETHING THAT THE LABOR PARTY IN RECENT TIMES HAS DEVELOPED INTO AN ART FORM AND WHICH THE MEDIA HAS TAKEN UP WITH ENTHUSIASM AND THAT IS WHY WE LOST THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES SEAT IN THE TERRITORY. IT IS

CLEAR TO ME THAT THOSE WHO VOTE FOR THE TERRITORY NATIONALS ARE BASICALLY CONSERVATIVES WITH A STRONG SENSE OF ENTERPRISE, A DISLIKE OF UNIONISM, RADICALISM, CENTRALISM AND UNIONISM. BASICALLY THEY EMBRACE A STRONG CONSERVATIVE PHILOSOPHY. LET ME SAY TO THOSE PEOPLE THE CLP HAS THAT PHILOSOPHY AND HAS BEEN SO HISTORICALLY INFLUENTIAL IN ENSURING THAT ITS POLICIES REFLECT CONSERVATIVE VALUES. THE N.T. NATIONALS CALL FOR COALITION IS UNREALISTIC AND DEMONSTRATES A COMPLETE MISUNDERSTANDING OF THE POLITICAL PROCESS.

LOUISE The CLP's message was also reinforced by Federal Nationals Leader, Ian Sinclair.

IAN THERE ARE AT THE MOMENT SOME WITHIN THE TERRITORY WHO FIND IT BEST NOT TO PARTICIPATE WITHIN YOUR FORUMS BUT STILL TO ASSERT VIEWS THAT ARE IN SOME RESPECTS AS SIMILAR AS OUR OWN. AND ONE IN PARTICULAR WHO HAS TAKEN IT TO HIMSELF THE PSEUDO USE OF THE PARTY NAME OF WHICH I'M FEDERAL LEADER, I WOULD THINK WOULD BE FAR BETTER WERE HE TO ACCEPT THAT WITHIN OUR PARTY THERE IS AN OPPORTUNITY TO EXPRESS DIFFERENT POINTS OF VIEW. IF HE HAS A DIFFERENT POINT OF VIEW HIS VIEW WOULD BE HEARD. BUT WHEN THE MAJORITY ACHIEVES AN ATTITUDE AND BELIEVES SOMETHING SHOULD BE DONE HE TO SHOULD ADHERE TO IT AND FRANKLY IT IS ONLY ON THAT BASIS THAT WE ON THE CONSERVATIVE SIDE OF POLITICAL CAN PRESENT OURSELVES AS THE VIABLE ALTERNATE GOVERNMENT THAT WE GENERALLY ARE FEDERALLY AND THE STRONG POSITIVE CONSERVATIVE GOVERNMENT THAT YOU ARE IN THE TERRITORY.

LOUISE The Federal guest speakers, John Howard and Ian Sinclair, also used the conference to maintain the Opposition's rage over the likely appointment of

Bill Hayden as Governor General. The immigration debate was also raised by Mr Howard but his strong stand against multiculturalism was at odds with Mr Perron's belief that Australia's population should be doubled by the year 2025 by immigration and that a large component should come from our neighbours to the north, South East Asia. At a press conference later Mr Howard ducked questions on the apparent conflict. But back to land and conservation. One of the most popular speakers was the Shadow Environment Minister, Chris Puplick, though he stressed that land degradation, a thorny question in the Territory, is Australia's biggest environmental issue. He also told the CLP what it wanted to hear, that the Opposition if it wins Government and the Territory achieves Statehood is committed to handing back control of the Uluru and Kakadu National Parks to the Territory Government and is also committed to an expansion of uranium mining and giving the Territory Government greater control over mining safeguards.

PUPPLICK AT THE END OF THE DAY THE MANAGEMENT RESPONSIBILITIES OF EACH OF THE STATES FOR LAND WITHIN THEIR BOUNDARIES MUST BE EXACTLY THE SAME THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE FEDERATION. AT STATEHOOD THE POWERS OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY OVER THE PARKS WITHIN IT CAN BE NO DIFFERENT FROM THAT APPERTAINING TO MY OWN STATE OF NEW SOUTH WALES OR ANYWHERE ELSE IN AUSTRALIA. THE SECOND ISSUE OF THAT IS MINING IN GENERAL. OUR ENVIRONMENT POLICY RECOGNISES THE VITAL IMPORTANCE AND CONTRIBUTION OF THE MINING INDUSTRY TO THE AUSTRALIAN ECONOMY AND TO THE IMPROVEMENT IN THE STANDARDS OF LIVING IN ALL AUSTRALIANS. EQUALLY WE RECOGNISE THAT MINING ACTIVITY, IF NOT CARRIED OUT IN ACCORDANCE WITH ENVIRONMENTAL GUIDELINES DESIGNED TO MINIMISE

DAMAGE TO THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT, CAN RESULT IN UNACCEPTABLE DAMAGE. WE BELIEVE THAT MODERN EXPLORATION AND MINING PRACTICES CAN BE ENTIRELY CONSISTENT WITH REQUIREMENTS FOR ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION AND EVENTUAL SOUND AND EFFECTIVE REHABILITATION OF THE ENVIRONMENT. WE RECOGNISE THAT THIS INDEED IS WHAT MINERS THEMSELVES ALSO WANT. OUR POLICY WILL ALLOW THE CONTINUED EXPANSION OF THE MINING INDUSTRY OPERATING IN A WAY ENTIRELY CONSISTENT WITH SOUND ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION AND DAMAGE MINIMISATION POLICIES. FINALLY MAY I REFER SPECIFICALLY TO URANIUM MINING. THE FEDERAL OPPOSITION UNRESERVEDLY CONDEMNS THE LABOR GOVERNMENT'S URANIUM POLICIES AS ECONOMICALLY UNSOUND AND POLITICALLY HYPOCRITICAL. WE WILL PUT AN END TO THE FARCE OF THE THREE MINE POLICY AND WILL ALLOW THE FURTHER EXPANSION OF THE INDUSTRY ALONG THE LINES I HAVE ALREADY DESCRIBED. THE WORK OF THE OFFICE OF THE SUPERVISING SCIENTIST WILL BE RATIONALISED AND ITS FUNCTIONS TRANSFERRED TO THE AUSTRALIAN NUCLEAR SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY ORGANISATION AND TO THE UNIVERSITY COLLEGE FOR APPROPRIATE AGENCIES OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY.

LOUISE Senator Puplick also showed he is not a politician without a sense of humour.

PUPLICK MAY I TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO THANK YOUR MINISTERS, PARTICULARLY DARYL MANZIE AND BARRY COULTER, WHO HAVE TAUGHT ME SO MUCH ABOUT ENVIRONMENTAL SENSITIVITY AND THE VALUE OF EROSION.

LOUISE Lands Minister, Daryl Manzie, launched a strong defence of the Territory Government's land policies and an attack on Federal Land Rights Legislation. He said his Government is opposed to the Land Rights Act as it stands because inalienable